

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AGRE-00 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DHA-05
/101 W

-----065114 260632Z /14

R 251310Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8022

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ELAB, TS, LY

SUBJ: TUNISIAN EMIGRANT LABOR IN LIBYA

REF: TUNIS 3542 AND 5940

1. APPARENT RAPID IMPROVEMENT IN TUNISIAN-LIBYAN
RELATIONS IN RECENT WEEKS HAS RAISED POSSIBILITY
OF EXPORTING LARGE NUMBERS OF SURPLUS TUNISIAN WORKERS
TO LIBYA. GOT OFFICIALS AND GENERAL PUBLIC, HOWEVER,
HAVE NO MORE THAN FUZZY IDEA OF WHERE THIS EMIGRATION
COULD LEAD IN TERMS OF PERMANENT, LARGE SCALE TUNISIAN
PRESENCE IN LIBYA AND GREATER TUNISIAN ECONOMIC
DEPENDENCE ON WORKER REMITTANCES FROM LIBYA.
UNEMPLOYED TUNISIANS HAVE RESPONDED TO PROSPECT
OF WORK IN LIBYA BY FLOCKING TO GOT EMIGRANT WORKER
AGENCY AND TO LIBYAN CONSULATE IN TUNIS.

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2. WE HAVE DISCUSSED ISSUE WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL
OF GOT OFFICE OF EMIGRANT LABOR BUT HE WAS RELUCTANT
TO MAKE ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF TUNISIANS NOW IN LIBYA.
HE NOTED THAT A DEFINITIVE FIGURE IS DIFFICULT TO
ARRIVE AT SINCE LARGE NUMBERS OF TUNISIANS TRAVEL TO
LIBYA, AND IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DIFFER-

ENTIATE BETWEEN BORDER CROSSINGS FOR TOURISM AND THOSE FOR WORK. HE ESTIMATED THERE ARE PROBABLY NO MORE THAN 55,000 TUNISIANS IN LIBYA NOW FOR PURPOSE OF WORKING. HE NOTED NUMBER IS BEING AUGMENTED BY APPROXIMATELY 1,300 PER MONTH, AND THAT "BOOM" IN AUGUST COULD BOOST RATE. AS IN PAST, MOST TUNISIANS IN LIBYA ARE EMPLOYED AS AGRICULTURAL FIELD LABORERS AND IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY. ALTHOUGH LARGE CROWDS OUTSIDE LIBYAN CONSULATE GIVE DIFFERENT IMPRESSION, HE SAID GOT IS SEEKING TO KEEP FLOW AT ORDERLY PACE.

3. WHILE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS OFFICIAL TENDED TO DOWNPLAY SCOPE OF EMIGRATION TO LIBYA, FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD US THT A RECENT GOT STUDY OF QUESTION INDICATED THAT THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 130,000 TUNISIANS IN LIBYA. HE SAID THAT NUMBER OF TUNISIANS IN LIBYA HAS ALWAYS EXCEEDED FIGURE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY GOT, POINTING OUT THAT ACTUAL NUMBER OF TUNISIANS IN LIBYA BEFORE MARCH 1976 WAS 80,000 AND NOT 40 TO 45,000 AS CLAIMED BY GOT AT THAT TIME.

4. IF THE FIGURE OF 45,000 TUNISIANS IN LIBYA IS ACCEPTED FOR MARCH 1976 (WHEN MASS EXPULSIONS BEGAN) IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE NUMBER OF TUNISIANS IN LIBYA HAS AGAIN REACHED THAT LEVEL OR HIGHER. GOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AUTHORITIES CLAIMED THAT LIBYA EXPELLED 14,000 TUNISIANS IN SIX MONTH PERIOD FOLLOWING MARCH 1976. OFFICIALLY SPONSORED WORKER EMIGRATION TO LIBYA WAS REINITIATED IN EARLY 1977 AND HAS CONTINUED AT LEVEL OF APPROXIMATELY 1,300 WORKERS PER MONTH SINCE. THIS PACE HAS APPARENTLY INCREASED IN RECENT WEEKS. IN ADDITION TO OFFICIALU EMIGRATION PROGRAM, ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS OF UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS IS COMMON OCCURENCE AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL ELEMENT IN EXPORT OF WORKERS TO LIBYA. THIS ILLEGAL FLOW COULD HAVE EASILY BOOSTED THE NUMBER OF TUNISIANS TO 55,000 TO 60,000. THE 130,000 FIGURES ADVANCED TO US BY FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL APPEARS HIGH BUT MAY CONSTITUTE FOREIGN MINISTRY ESTIMATE OF ALL TUNISIANS IN LIBYA (INCLUDING WORKERS, PERMANENT RESIDENTS, TUNISIANS MARRIED TO LIBYANS AND TOURISTS) FOR PURPOSES OF CONSULAR PROTECTION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EMIGRANTS, FOREIGN WORKERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TUNIS06084
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770308-1031
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770821/aaaaarnx.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7286e852-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TUNIS 3542
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1479970
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUNISIAN EMIGRANT LABOR IN LIBYA
TAGS: PFOR, ELAB, TS, LY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7286e852-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009